DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 266 064 SO 016 913

TITLE	Hope for Tomorrow: A Booklet of Questions and Answers. The United Nations for Young People.
INSTITUTION	United Nations, New York, N.Y.
REPORT NO	DESI.E114
PUB DATE	Jun 85
NOTE	20p.; Produced by the United Nations Department of Public Information,Division for Economic and Social Information.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Materials (For Learner) (051)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Instructional Materials; International Cooperation; *International Organizations; *International Programs; Junior High Schools; Orientation Materials; Secondary Education; *World Affairs
IDENTIFIERS	International Youth Year; *United Nations

ABSTRACT

Suitable for junior and senior high school students and presented in a synthesized, easy-to-read format, this booklet includes more than 80 questions and answers relating to the United Nations. With the U.N. proclamation of 1985 as International Youth Year serving as an underlying theme, the booklet begins by outlining U.N. activities during International Youth Year. After reading the series of questions and answers, students obtain a simplified profile of the world's total population of young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Questions examine facts about the poorer countries of the world relating to population growth, health conditions, and educational opportunities. An overview of the U.N. includes brief statements about what the U.N. is, how countries become members of the U.N., how the U.N. operates, how the U.N. goes about solving problems like drought and famine in Africa, and limitations of the U.N. Questions then focus on the role of the Security Council, the General Assembly, and a number of specialized U.N. organizations. Historical questions about the U.N. are then answered, followed by questions about the oldest and youngest U.N. organization, the U.N. budget, the number of people working for the U.N., the number of languages spoken, the "Group of 77," the role of the U.N. Development Programs, themes of International Youth Year, U.N. resolutions concerning disarmament, special problems of the U.N., U.N. training, the United Nations University, and ways to get involved in U.N. activities. (LH)

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The United Nations for Young People

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Hope For Tomorrow

A Booklet of Questions and Answers

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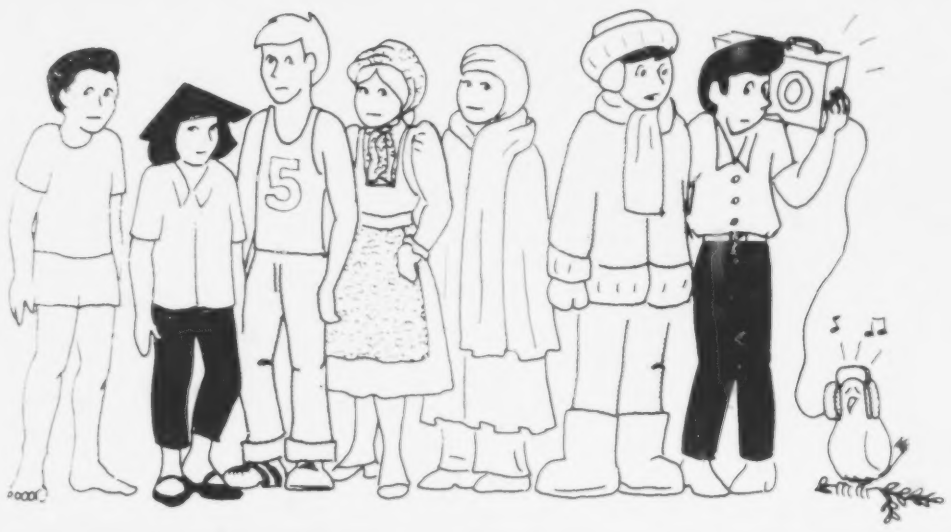


What's the United Nations got to do with us?

Quite a lot.

You need never fear you will die of smallpox. That makes you the first generation in history to be free of this scourge which has taken millions of lives and disfigured countless people over the centuries. It was wiped off the face of the earth in a 13-year campaign of vaccinations against the disease led by the World Health Organization (WHO), a member of the United Nations family.

You may have seen pictures of aid workers handing out medicines or delivering food to famine victims. The helpers were probably men and women sent there by the United Nations.

Perhaps you know a refugee family. There's a fair chance the United Nations has helped them. It might still be taking care of their needs for food, shelter and protection. It plays a major part in finding refugees new homes.

If you live in the Middle East, Cyprus, or the Kashmir region, you already know the United Nations is a power for peace. The United Nations has soldiers in all these places, trying to calm tensions and stop fighting from breaking out.

What if I do not need emergency help?

The United Nations still touches your life in many ways.

If you want to send a letter across the world, today that's easy—thanks to the United Nations, through its associated organization, the Universal Postal Union (UPU). The UPU smooths the delivery of letters, postcards and parcels around the globe.

A United Nations organization, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), works to ensure that when you turn on the radio or television, you don't hear a lot of noise from overlapping stations.

Other United Nations groups make it easier for countries to sell all kinds of things to each other, so that everyone can enjoy more of the pleasures of life.

If you are in school or training for a job, it may be thanks to a programme of the United Nations.

Does this really concern me as an individual?

As a young person with your life before you, you are surely interested in taking part in the activities of the world around you. You probably want to see people have a better life through social and economic progress. It is a safe bet that you want the world to be free from war.

The United Nations is keen to help you achieve these goals. Like you, it wants to promote participation, development and peace.

The United Nations also concerns you because it has proclaimed 1985 as International Youth Year (IYY).

What is International Youth Year?

The United Nations chose 1985 as a special year to focus on young people, their problems, their hopes and the contribution young people can make in shaping the future of humanity.

What is happening during IYY?

Countries around the world, young people all over the globe, regional groups and international organizations have scheduled activities. For example, to mark IYY, the Girl Guides, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts — linking over 24 million people — drew up their first-ever world-wide programme of joint activities.

And there will be three major international meetings:

- an International Youth Conference and Festival of Arts, in Jamaica;
- the 12th World Festival of Youth and Students, in Moscow;
- a Friendly Gathering of Youth for Asia and the Pacific, in China.

What is the United Nations doing for International Youth Year?

At its next General Assembly (a kind of Parliament of Nations) which opens in New York in September 1985, several days will be devoted to discussions of how to help young people.

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, called a world congress on youth for July.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO), a United Nations agency, launched a study on the needs and problems of young workers. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) decided to prepare a special plan of action after studying the situation of young refugees.

But it was agreed that most activities would be national.

What kind of national events are taking place?

National activities include courses in leadership, work camps, reading instruction, housing and recreational programmes, a tree-planting campaign, cultural festivals, all kinds of competitions, government grants for young people's projects to earn money, and peace education courses.

What does the United Nations know about young people?

We know that around the world, close to one person in five is aged between 15 and 24. That means there are over 850 million of you. If you all lined up, one behind the other, the queue would go nearly seven times around the Earth at the equator.

How fast can you walk? Four kilometres an hour? If you walked 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, it would take you over seven years to get from one end of this queue to the other. It would take you nearly 28 years to reach 875 million if you started counting now and moved on to a new number every second.

To put it another way, today there are six young people for every square kilometre of land on our planet.

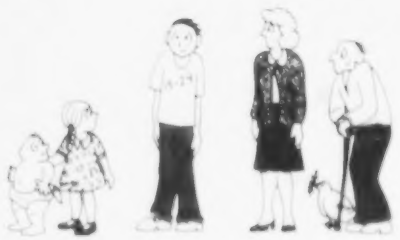
What else do you know about us?

We know that sometime in 1991, the world's total of people aged 15 to 24 is likely to reach one billion. That will mean an increase of 16 per cent, over one sixth, in your population in about a decade.

Three-quarters of you live in the poorer countries of the world: in Africa, Asia and Latin America. And that is where populations are growing fastest. By the year 2000, four out of five of the people in the world aged 15 to 24 will be living in these countries.

Are you saying there are too many of us?

No. We know that you are the healthiest age group. In rich and poor countries alike, children under 10 are nearly twice as likely to die. They fall victim mainly to infectious diseases such as measles and diarrhoea, which you have survived. People in the age group ahead of you — aged 25 to 29 — also have a higher death rate than you, mostly the result of degenerative illnesses, such as cancer and heart disease.



And what else?

You are probably the best schooled generation in history. More of you in your age group are able to attend secondary school than ever before. In the rich world, it is 84 per cent (more than 8 out of 10), compared to 71 per cent 25 years ago. In the poorer countries, nearly four out of 10 teenagers are in secondary school, twice as many as in 1960.

So what's the bad news?

Millions of children do not get the chance of any schooling, particularly young people in rural areas and girls.

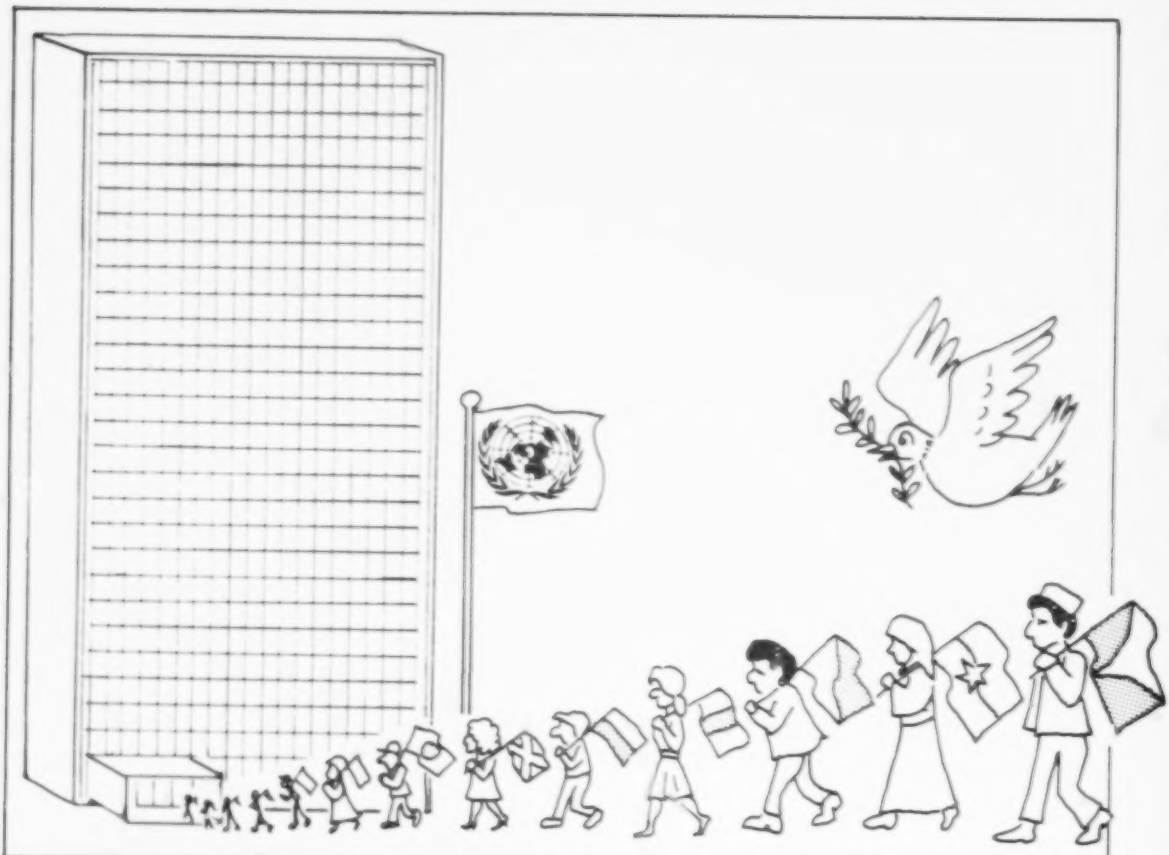
We also know that in most cities and towns of the world, young people have a harder time than other groups to find a job. People aged 15 to 24 make up seven out of ten of the unemployed in Syria, for example. They account for over 50 per cent of the people without jobs in Venezuela, nearly half in the United States of America and four out of ten in France.

What do all these figures mean?

They show that if you have this booklet in your hand, you are already one of a tiny minority: we could not hope to reach more than a fraction of all the young people in the world.

If you can follow the text, it means you are also part of a privileged group, those people who can read. In some countries, four out of five people are illiterate, but since 1950, this basic education has been able to reach more and more people. Now only three in 10 adults are unable to read and write.

If you have reached this far in the booklet, it indicates, too, that you have taken a major step out into the world. And we in the United Nations are glad to be able to stretch out our hand to you, because there's one other thing we know: you will be the world's leaders in the year 2000. Around 85 million children will be born during International Youth Year. One hundred and fifty new lives will start for every minute the clock ticks. They will be your young people as we enter the next century. It is up to you whether they will have a better world to live in than the one we inhabit today.



Who or what is the United Nations?

It's an organization of the world's States. It works to keep international peace and maintain security. It tries to develop friendly relations among nations. It encourages co-operation to solve international problems. It promotes respect for human rights and basic freedoms. It helps countries with their economic development.

How do countries become members?

Any country can join the organization if it accepts the United Nations Charter, which expresses these ideals.

The Seychelles (population 66,000) is a Member. China (population over 1,000 million) also belongs to the United Nations. Almost every country in the world has now joined the United Nations.

A kind of world government?

No. A kind of world's parliament or an association. A society for peace and progress. The United Nations does not force countries to do what it says. The countries themselves decide what they want the United Nations to do. It can advise Governments. It can tell them what would be best for them to do, if they ask for suggestions. It can send in people to help, if the Government wants. But no country has to give up the power to decide its own affairs when it joins the United Nations, and the United Nations can act only when its Member States decide it should do something. United Nations membership does not infringe on national sovereignty.

What exactly does the United Nations do?

Name a problem. The chances are the United Nations is working on it.

Are you worried about jobs, the environment, human rights, or where you can find your next meal?

Perhaps what bothers you is getting equal treatment as a woman, finding an education, improving working conditions, staying healthy, or abolishing the threat of war.

What if your problems are drink, drugs or crime? Or perhaps you feel lost confronted with the world of sexuality and responsibilities.

The United Nations tackles all these issues.

You mean the United Nations runs soup kitchens, a police force, law courts and family advice clinics?

Not exactly.

If you are a refugee, you might well be getting food through the United Nations. There are over 10 million refugees at this moment all over the world, on every continent. Many are receiving help through programmes run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

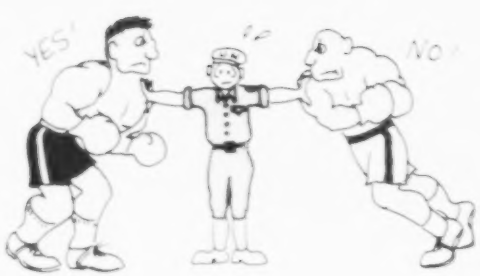
UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, provides supplies and equipment to 300,000 health and day-care centres and schools. It works to improve water systems and trains over half a million community workers in services for children.

United Nations soldiers, known as blue caps from the berets and helmets they wear, do act like police officers. Their main job is to keep the peace and separate adversaries in crisis spots. They represent law and order rather than armed force. The United Nations has more than 9,000 soldiers from 23 nations serving in five separate peace-keeping operations.

The United Nations does have a panel of judges, the 15-member International Court of Justice, which sits in The Hague, Netherlands. Since 1946, the World Court has handed down 43 judgments and 181 orders dealing with disputes involving more than 44 countries or Governments. The judges, each from a different country, are mainly called in to settle international legal questions.

It's possible, too, that a United Nations volunteer may be working in a family planning clinic in your country, if the United Nations has been asked to help.

But that's not how the United Nations spends most of its time.



So how does it operate?

Usually, the United Nations works through Governments to solve problems. It may provide the funds, expert advice, training or equipment. But the job itself may be carried out by someone from your own country or from another country's aid organization. The United Nations often acts as a channel for contacts between one country and another. In fact, the United Nations spends a lot of its time organizing negotiations and agreements between the States.

How does the United Nations go about solving a problem like the drought and famine in Africa?

The Secretary-General (chief official) of the United Nations, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, set up a special office to raise funds and help make sure that relief supplies were reaching the countries in need. He called an international conference in Geneva during March 1985 to organize international help for 30 million people in Africa now facing starvation.

The aim was to raise millions of dollars in emergency aid for people in the 20 worst-affected African countries.

Government ministers and representatives of nearly 100 countries turned up for the two-day meeting. Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar told them: "Famine in Africa today threatens more lives than ever have been lost in any war in history."

What was the result?

Several nations pledged help immediately, in cash, in food, in medicines and equipment. But it is not only large countries like the United States, Japan and Italy which are helping. The small

Caribbean State of Trinidad and Tobago announced that its people had given over 500,000 U.S. dollars through a public fund to help Ethiopia's drought-stricken population.

Surely that wasn't the first time the United Nations took action on the drought?

Not at all. As long ago as February 1982, the United Nations had issued a special alert on southern Africa, when the region known as the Sahel — south of the Sahara Desert — was suffering its third year of drought.

Satellite photos showed that the "green line" of vegetation bordering the Sahel had dropped south by 150 to 200 kilometres.

In December 1983, the General Assembly urged countries to give food to the African States facing shortages. It also called for international action to help African nations develop economically and technically.

Why was that?

Because it is not just a food crisis. African countries face a range of critical problems at the same time. Populations are increasing faster in Africa than anywhere else. But tropical diseases take a heavy toll on life. For most people, jobs and cash are hard to find. There's even a shortage of fuelwood. It can take several hours each day to find and gather enough wood for a family's needs.

In addition, the soil is often naturally thin and weak. Under pressure to produce more and more, it has given up. Across wide parts of the continent the Earth can no longer support crops or grazing animals.

People have become desperate. Naturally, they try to escape this situation. Add to this the political turmoil on the continent and it is no surprise that Africa has more than half the world's known refugees.

What is the United Nations doing about these problems?

The United Nations has several special programmes for Africa, to increase food production, support co-operatives and small businesses, provide job training, protect people against common diseases such as river blindness, and give them clean water. The World Bank has just opened a fund for long-term efforts to enable African countries to improve their situation. It has already put together over one thousand million U.S. dollars.

Why didn't the United Nations do something before?

It did, as much as it could and as much as the available funds allowed. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) alerted the world to the problem some time ago. And the United Nations has made efforts to tackle the underlying problems that have now erupted as a crisis in Africa.

For example, it encourages family planning, a world emergency food reserve, and assistance for small farmers in rural areas to increase production.

But the United Nations can hardly claim to have been successful if more than 20 countries in Africa today suffer from famine

It doesn't pretend to have achieved more than limited results.

Take the soil problem. For the last eight years, at least the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has been trying to alert people to the world-wide dangers of soil erosion and the spread of deserts. Since the middle of the last decade, productive land has been vanishing so fast that it is as if we lost an area the equivalent of Hungary or Guatemala each year. Scientists say human misuse of the Earth is mostly to blame, particularly overworking of fragile soils.

What went wrong?

The United Nations really does not have much money: it would need to spend all its cash every year for the next 20 years to beat back the spreading deserts and stop soils from breaking down. But 150 million people in Africa face the threat of famine today. They cannot wait for aid until tomorrow.

In the midst of all their other difficulties, Governments are slow to give the fight against deserts a high enough priority. Efforts through

the General Assembly to raise cash for tree planting, soil control and irrigation projects brought in only one quarter of the minimum amount needed.

The situation has grown worse since 1977. Today desertification threatens 850 million people (compared with 650 million in 1977) and a third of all our lands: an area the size of North and South America combined is already affected.

Who decides what the United Nations should do?

Governments decide. Their representatives control the work of all the organizations.

How do they go about it?

They take the major decisions during the General Assembly, unless the issue is an urgent problem affecting peace and security. In this case, it goes before the Security Council.

What is the Security Council?

The Security Council has 15 members. China, France, the USSR, the United Kingdom and the United States have permanent seats on the Council. The other 10 members are chosen by the General Assembly, and each of these States serves on the Council for two years. It can hold a session at any time, and usually meets when there is an international crisis.

Why is the General Assembly called the Parliament of Nations?

The General Assembly is the forum where representatives of every country can speak. each Member State has one vote, and decisions are usually taken by a majority vote. This means that more than half of the States voting after a discussion have to agree.

When can I see it at work?

The United Nations Headquarters is in New York. The General Assembly meets there for about three months towards the end of every year to consider major problems and set the guidelines for the United Nations family of organizations. But it regularly holds special meetings, also, on issues such as development, disarmament, and trade.

What do the sessions involve?

In 1984, the General Assembly adopted 247 resolutions and took 83 decisions in the three months from 18 September to 18 December. That works out to over four problems tackled each day.

That doesn't sound like very much time

It isn't. Because of this, the General Assembly deals with most of its work in seven main committees, and a number of special commissions which in turn handle detailed problems. Among them, you may have heard of the Human Rights Commission. It too has smaller bodies looking into problems — such as its working group against slavery, and a committee which watches over political and civil rights.

Then there are the 17 international bodies related to the United Nations. These specialized agencies and organizations each have a distinct membership and act independently.

What is it specialized agencies do?

You may already know of some: UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. WHO is the World Health Organization.

We've already spoken of FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Others come more rarely into the public eye: the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), for example, which sets safety standards for nuclear power plants and checks that nuclear material is not diverted to military use.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) operates a "World Weather Watch" to predict and monitor potential natural disasters, such as hurricanes, cyclones and earthquakes.

Flying is safer for air passengers around the world because of standards and regulations established through the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The International Maritime Organization (IMO) looks into such problems as safety at sea and pollution by ships.

Is it fair to give every country, large and small, an equal vote in the General Assembly?

This is how the rules of the General Assembly were written and how they have worked from the very beginning of the United Nations. Iceland, for example, with a population of under one quarter of a million, has enjoyed full voting rights since it joined the United Nations in 1946.

Because voluntary contributions account for over half the United Nations spending, countries have plenty of choice in the programmes they support with extra cash. Most assistance programmes are funded by such gifts.

Also, the General Assembly's decisions on most issues are no more than recommendations. It has no powers to force any Government to act as the Assembly wishes. But the resolutions do carry the weight of world opinion, and this is part of the argument for giving each State an equal voice.

More and more, though, United Nations bodies today seek to approve decisions without having to go to a vote. This practice of reaching agreement by "consensus" involves finding common ground between the majority and the minority, rather than counting heads to force through a proposal.

And after all, isn't voting in the General Assembly a little like elections in one's own country where everyone voting has just one vote regardless of how rich or poor they are?

When was the United Nations formed?

Fifty countries meeting in San Francisco (United States) in 1945 drew up the United Nations Charter. It was signed there on 26 June 1945. Poland was not at the conference but signed the Charter later to become one of the 51 founding Member States.

Where does the name come from?

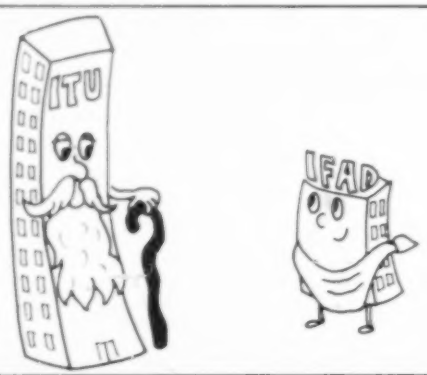
It was devised by President Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States. It was first used on 1 January 1942, in a Declaration by 26 countries.

Why is 24 October celebrated as United Nations Day if the Charter was signed on 26 June?

The Charter had to be ratified by China, France, the USSR, the United Kingdom, the United States, and a majority of the other countries. As a result, the United Nations officially came into existence four months after the signing, on 24 October 1945. So you see, the United Nations is perhaps younger than your parents.

Which is the oldest United Nations organization?

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), based in Geneva, was founded in 1865 as the International Telegraph Union.



Which is the youngest organization in the United Nations?

The newest of the United Nations specialized agencies is IFAD, the International Fund for Agricultural Development. It was set up in 1976 to fund and sponsor projects which give direct benefit to the poorest people in rural areas.

How many countries are members of the United Nations?

As of April 1985, the United Nations had 159 Member States.

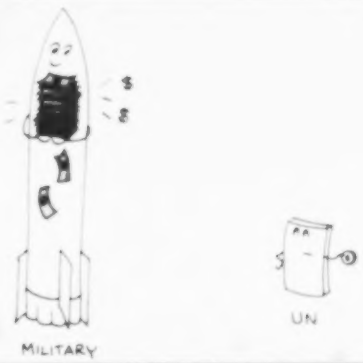
How much does the United Nations spend each year?

Its budget for 1984 to 1985 was set at 1,611 million U.S. dollars for all the members of the United Nations family. Grants by countries and institutions for particular programmes normally add as much again to the total the United Nations has to spend. It comes in all to about four thousand million U.S. dollars.

Isn't that a lot?

Certainly not in terms of the problems the United Nations is trying to tackle. The money it can count on is less than the world's military spending in one day (700 thousand million U.S. dollars in 1983). It is much less than many company budgets. The New York City Police

Department spends more than the United Nations regular budget (the total of contributions). Almost every country in the United Nations, even among the poorest States, earns more from its trade.



Where does the United Nations get its money?

Apart from voluntary contributions, each country is assessed to pay part of the budget.

How is the amount decided?

It mostly depends on the State's national income in relation to other United Nations members. The General Assembly fixes the contributions as percentages of the budget. But it has set a maximum of 25 per cent.

Which State pays most?

Not surprisingly, the richer nations with highly developed industries are the five biggest contributors in millions of dollars. The United States heads the list. It is the only country assessed for 25 per cent.

Next on the list is the USSR, assessed at 10.54 per cent.

But if you list the top contributors according to the amount they give per person in their population, then Norway, Sweden and Denmark rise to the top of the list.

And if you work out contributions as a proportion of national income, then Guinea-Bissau and Gambia are the major contributors. Along with the Congo and Sao Tome and Principe, they are making the biggest sacrifice to pay into the United Nations system.

That is because the Assembly has set one tenth of one per cent as the minimum contribution. It is paid by 78 countries. Most of them would pay less if their national income alone was taken into account.

If the United Nations was such a good idea, why did it take so long to establish?

The United Nations was not the first attempt to establish a world forum. It adopted several international organizations which were already in existence. The Universal Postal Union dates back to 1874. The International Labour Organisation (ILO), the first specialized agency to become associated with the United Nations, was set up in 1919 to promote better working conditions and social justice.

But the most ambitious effort to establish an association of the world's independent States was the League of Nations, which started work in 1920. The city of Geneva made available 25 hectares (55 acres) of land. For the headquarters, five architects designed an enormous building as large as the French Palace of Versailles.

Then the League withered away in the mounting thunder of hostilities and world tension during the 1930s.

How many people work for the United Nations?

The United Nations system, including all the organizations, employs about 50,000 people. World-wide staff for the United Nations itself total 22,000. New York is where about 6,000 work, at United Nations Headquarters. Geneva has around the same number of employees.

Where are all the others?

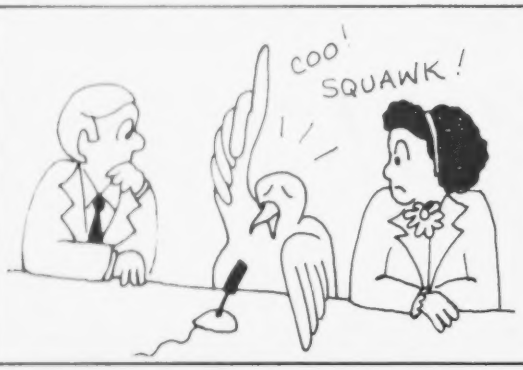
Spread among some 620 places known as duty stations around the world. You will find the largest numbers where international organizations have their headquarters: Geneva, Paris, Rome and Vienna. Among the 20,000 executive-level staff of the United Nations, more than eight out of ten work outside their home country.

How many meetings does the United Nations hold each year?

Well over 10,000. More than 3,800 meetings are held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York each year. The Palais des Nations in Geneva, where the United Nations European offices are headquartered, is the busiest conference centre in the world, with over 5,000 meetings a year. The biggest organizations have meetings nearly every day of the year.

How many languages are spoken in the United Nations?

The General Assembly has six official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. Except for Arabic, these are also official languages for the Security Council. But you can find more than 150 languages spoken by United Nations staff members as their mother tongue. United Nations interpreters have been known to speak up to 16 languages.



What if I want to address a United Nations meeting and I do not know any of the official languages?

You can still speak, but you have to provide your own interpreter.

How many people take part in United Nations meetings?

About 3,000 Government representatives take part in sessions of the General Assembly. During peak conference periods in Geneva, around 7,000 delegates and officials are at work. About 25,000 delegates pass through the Palais des Nations each year.

Do I have to speak for a Government to address the United Nations?

Not at all. About 800 non-governmental organizations, known together as NGOs, have the right to present their views at meetings of the United Nations as groups concerned with economic and social questions, health, education and human rights. NGOs were the source of some major activities which have affected the course of the United Nations. On their initiative the United Nations held a world conference on the status of women, declared 1979 the International Year of the Child, and proclaimed 1985 as International Youth Year.

Who are the people known as observers at United Nations meetings?

The Holy See, for example, the State headed by His Holiness, the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, is an observer at the United Nations. It cannot vote, but it can speak at meetings, and pays towards the regular budget. Switzerland is an observer, and an active member of nearly all the specialized organizations. The Palestine Liberation Organization, as the representative of the Palestinian people, has observer status at the United Nations. There are others, too.

Is it true that the United Nations is a "paper factory"?

The New York Times newspaper uses more paper to produce one of its Sunday editions than the United Nations in a whole year. But it is one of the world's major publishers, putting out 800 new books every year.

What is the Group of 77, and why are there 125 of them?

The Group links the newly independent States and still-industrializing countries in the United Nations. When these States, commonly known as the developing countries, came to-

gether in 1964 to issue a declaration on economic development, there were 77 of them.

Today, 125 States take part in their talks and activities, but they are still known as the Group of 77. In fact, 32 of the 51 founding members of the United Nations were developing countries.

What good has the United Nations done for poor countries?

More than 70 United Nations Members were under colonial rule when the organization was founded. The United Nations helped many of them to become independent.

But let's just look at the United Nations Development Programme. UNDP supports 5,000 projects each year in more than 150 countries and territories, helping poor regions attract the money for large-scale development activities and use their resources effectively. UNDP, which is funded by voluntary contributions, provides the cash and other United Nations organizations usually carry out the projects. The countries being helped pay over half the costs involved.

What effect has it had?

UNDP projects have stimulated over 48 thousand million U.S. dollars of investment. Minerals worth over 50 thousand million U.S. dollars have been found through UNDP-sponsored surveys. Millions of men and women, ranging from agricultural technicians and educators to medical personnel, have trained to obtain professional and technical skills as part of UNDP projects.

That doesn't sound fair to the countries which do not need development aid. Is it?

Most of the countries that receive aid also give money to the United Nations, and the countries which give aid through UNDP get money back. The United Nations spends most of its budget in developed countries — 40 per cent of its regular budget is spent in New York, for example, and 25 per cent in Geneva.

As for voluntary contributions, the United Nations Association in the United States (UNA/USA) estimates that the United States economy receives almost half as much again as the Administration puts in, mainly through UNDP salaries for experts and purchases of equipment.

Participation, Development and Peace are the themes of International Youth Year. But what does this mean?

We can look at what is happening around the world. In Haiti, a group of 40 young people aged 16 to 20 decided to help look after the children under 3 years of age in the small mountain community Baudin. The infants were often left in the care of children hardly older than themselves. The teenagers in the programme were already receiving health and agricultural training, but agreed to take part in the project launched by the Ministry of Social Affairs with UNICEF support. They each visit five families with young children and have established play centres for the infants. One unexpected result of the project is that some of the young people who had previously planned to leave the area have now decided to stay.

In Burkina Faso (formerly the African State of Upper Volta) school children agreed to use their summer holidays to help teach other young people to read. The National Youth Committee is organizing the campaign under the title, "Let's share our literacy".

In the small Kenyan town of Kibwesi, older children in 20 primary schools are learning how to care for disabled children. Young adults are taking part in workshops to learn how to make crutches, trolleys, and toys.

In the Philippines, a community health programme supported by the United Nations includes the training of children to become "health scouts" in their villages. They are learning to give their younger brothers and sisters a bath and simple health care. They are helping their parents to stimulate the younger children's mental development through interesting toys and games.

The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen has enrolled young people to play the major role in a national campaign to teach over 150,000 women and nearly 40,000 men in towns and villages. Each student was supplied with a blackboard, chalk, readers and exercise books, and was then responsible for teaching 10 to 20 people.

This is all part of community participation. But participation also means that young people have a right to be included in discussions and decisions affecting their lives and the future of their societies. It means they have a right to be taken seriously.

You could look at it as a human right. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948 states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

How does the United Nations make sure I enjoy these rights?

Through the international agreements which countries approve. The year after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example, the International Labour Organisation adopted an agreement giving workers protection against harassment as members of trade unions. A treaty to stop the exploitation of prostitutes was approved the same year, and in 1950, a United Nations High Commissioner was given the permanent job of protection of refugees.

Today, there's an international pact to guarantee economic, social and cultural rights, and another on civil and political rights, as well as treaties to stop abuses, such as treating women worse than men. Some countries have even agreed to allow their citizens to complain directly to the United Nations if they feel they are not getting their civil or political rights.

Why is it then that we hear that people are still thrown into prison for their political opinions, killed without trial, or forced to live almost as slaves?

The gap between law and practice is the distance between our ideals and everyday reality. Through moral pressure, the United Nations tries to close this gap between paper promises and human rights in action. Few States can ignore for long the disapproval of the world community, especially when this includes their friends. Change may come slowly. But usually, there is progress.

What about development?

Many of the community participation projects we spoke about also help development. As we have seen in the African countries suffer-

ing from drought, the lack of basic services and rights can lead to political turmoil. So participation, development and peace are all linked together.

What is the United Nations doing specifically for peace?

The first resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, on 24 January 1946, called for the world to do away with nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

Since then, disarmament — whether this means fewer normal weapons or a ban on atomic weapons — has been almost permanently before the United Nations for study and negotiation.

What have they achieved?

The world has taken some first steps to control nuclear weapons. A lot of testing has been banned. Outer space and the sea-bed have been put out of bounds to nuclear weapons. Another treaty tries to stop the spread of nuclear weapons from the atomic powers to non-nuclear nations.

Ten years ago, the first real disarmament agreement came into force — that is, the first treaty to destroy existing weapons. That was the pact banning production and stocking of germ warfare weapons.

Negotiators are still working on a complete nuclear test ban and a treaty to outlaw some of the worst chemical weapons, such as nerve gas.

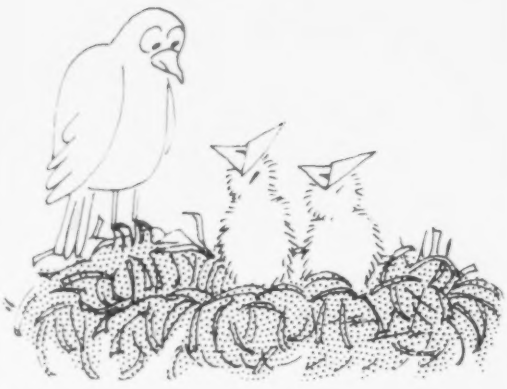
What is the United Nations doing to help young people?

Many day-to-day United Nations programmes help young people. The 15 to 24 age group in most parts of the world are already adults with adult responsibilities. They have as much in common with the older generation as with the children around them. They are mostly poor and live in rural areas. By 25, most young people are parents.

This means that general United Nations projects help them: WHO programmes for clean water, ILO measures to improve working conditions and encourage vocational training, United Nations recommendations on human rights. The IYY is a chance for United Nations organizations to review the impact of their programmes on young people.

What about our special problems?

We know more than 300 million are unable to find jobs. Prospects are bleak for the millions of new job-seekers each year. Some Governments refuse young people a full voice in society. Few countries have reliable information about young people and migration, unemployment, under-employment, health or housing. IYY is an opportunity to encourage Governments to look at these issues — as well as "youth problems" such as accidents, suicide, alcoholism, smoking among young people, and teenage pregnancy.



What about improving my chances of finding a job?

Training is a major concern of the United Nations. We know that many countries need skilled people, and many poor young people need the opportunity to obtain skills. Youth training centres in the Sudan have been training 2,000 men and women a year, with United Nations help. Burma's first computer training centre, supported by the United Nations, has turned out 1,500 computer operators and programmers. About 1,000 medical assistants have been trained for rural health centres in Bangladesh.

But what if I can't find the training I want in my home country?

UNESCO has given several thousand study grants to young people. These grants, designed to help people from poorer countries to obtain skills that can benefit their nation, are often linked to projects of the United Nations Development Programme. UNESCO plans to increase its study grants to 15,000 a year.

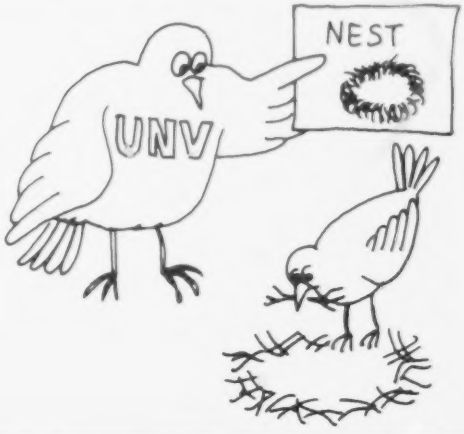
One United Nations activity often associated with young people is the United Nations Volunteers Programme, created in 1970. Today, it is the foremost supplier of middle and upper-level field experts for the United Nations, providing specialists who work closely with and help train people in developing countries who need additional skills. Around 1,000 are at work in 90 countries.

Who are United Nations Volunteers?

The average UN Volunteer is aged 25 to 35 (the Programme also welcomes qualified older people) with solid professional experience. Three quarters come from developing countries. All are paid a monthly allowance designed to give them a modest standard of living.

What kinds of things are they doing?

In the Comoros, for example, a Belgian diesel mechanic has helped build water wells. In Bhutan, an Indian UN Volunteer became the first doctor posted on a full-time basis to the Education Department to provide health services for students and introduce health education in schools. A social worker from Bangladesh was assigned to Sri Lanka and helped a group of blacksmiths set up a profitable co-operative.

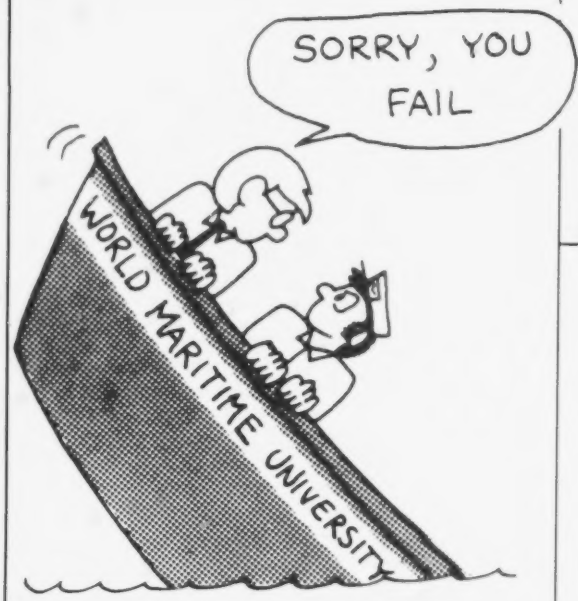


I've heard of the United Nations University. How can I enroll as a student?

You can't. It has no degree students, no central faculty of teachers, and no main campus where courses take place.

What is it then?

It is an international community of scholars who are engaged in research, post-graduate training and spreading knowledge about global problems of survival, development and welfare.



The United Nations University (UNU) is based in Japan but operates through a global network of research units and institutions in some 60 countries. Around 400 people have trained or studied on UNU fellowships.

The United Nations does have one campus, however, the World Maritime University, based at the coastal town of Malmö in southern Sweden.

What happens there?

This university, with some 150 students, is helping fill the urgent need in developing countries for high-level administrators, surveyors, lecturers and technical managers in shipping companies. The students study maritime administration, education and safety, and learn how to manage shipping companies.

Can you show me how a United Nations project works on the ground?

O.K. Let's go to Bucaramanga in the Latin American State of Colombia. It's just a medium-sized city, with 500,000 people. Shanty towns have sprung up on the eroded hills on the outskirts of the city.

We will focus on the poor neighbourhoods of the northern zone, and their 50,000 population. People here often live six and ten to a hut, sometimes with no sanitation or clean water. They often have no chance of receiving health care, getting any education, or enjoying any security in their lives.

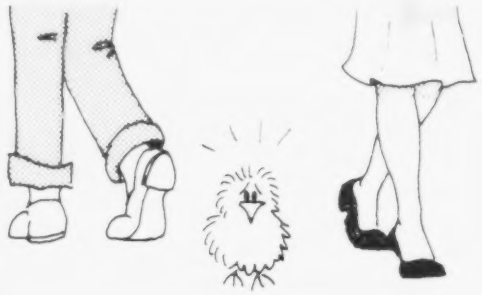
Prostitution is rife, even among girls as young as 11. People of all age groups commonly use drugs. Crime is widespread. As many as six out of 10 people have no jobs at all. Another 20 per cent are underemployed.

Children of the northern zone often have to shine shoes, wash cars and sell things in the street to help support their families. For some, the street is also home.

What's being done to help them?

Colombia's Institute for Family Welfare has been trying to help these children since 1979. It set up a centre, My Little Home, in the centre of town. As part of "Operation Friendship", educators went out into the street and offered children the chance to study half-time and work half-time.

This worked well. But until two years ago, nothing much was done to prevent the young of Bucaramanga from becoming street children.



How did the United Nations get involved?

In July 1983 UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, joined hands with government institutions to establish a programme providing basic services and ways to earn money in the neighbourhoods of the northern zone.

The programme includes primary health care to meet essential needs, contacts with the pre-school children aged 3 to 6, better sanitation, and efforts to find employment for Bucaramanga's poor.

UNICEF and the national institutions have organized major immunization campaigns and provided dental care for the community. They have spread the word that packages of mineral salts can prevent the debilitation from diarrhoea that is a major baby killer in poor countries.

This meant finding health promoters and training volunteers from the shanty town community. Non-governmental organizations such as Rotary, the Young Men's Christian Association and church groups have played a large role.

Where do the young people come in?

A cornerstone of the programme is the training of unemployed women and young people as volunteers. Each volunteer follows a six-week course, then provides services for about a dozen children in their own homes for two hours a day, three days a week.

The youth leaders offer a series of services to the street children: counselling, informal job training, a place in small work projects, education about family life, sports and recreation.

The programme also includes a fund for small regular loans.

Where is this organized?

The youth training is organized through the Amanecer Youth Centre — in Spanish, amanecer means "dawn" and "to wake up".

So far, the pre-school attention programme for children has been so successful it is being copied elsewhere in Colombia and Latin America.

But UNICEF sees the real innovation of the programme in the opportunity it gives for adolescents and young people to meet, talk about their problems, exchange ideas, and make proposals. The young people of Bucaramanga can understand participation and development — two themes of International Youth Year — as more than abstract words.

What's happening now?

UNICEF is providing cash, supplies and assistants to get the programme going. Its Committee in the Federal Republic of Germany has decided to give over 100,000 U.S. dollars for the street children programme, to be raised by West German youth groups. It is even providing video television equipment for the youth centre in Bucaramanga — so that young people in Europe can see how people of their age live in Bucaramanga and learn how the people of this small Colombian city view the world.

Suppose I'm convinced the United Nations is a good thing, how can I help support it?

You could join the United Nations Association in your country. That way, you can learn more about the activities of the United Nations around the world and tell people about them. Speak up in favour of the United Nations when you can. Contact the National Co-ordinating Committee for International Youth Year for more ideas.

What This Book Will Tell You

The name of the disease you will never catch...

Where to go in International Youth Year...

How long it takes to count to 875 million...

Why the famine in Africa today is worse than any war in history...

Why the famine is not just a food crisis...

Which founding Member State did not take part in drawing up the United Nations Charter...

Which is the baby of the United Nations family...

Why Guinea-Bissau and Gambia should be counted among major United Nations contributors...

What is the world's busiest conference centre...

Which newspaper uses more paper than the United Nations for one edition...

What was 51 in 1945 and now is 159 only 40 years later...

What young people are doing for IYY in Burkina Faso, Kenya and Yemen...

What was the first resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly...

When the world's first disarmament agreement came into force—and what it was...

Why no one graduates from the United Nations University...

How young people in Colombia are keeping their brothers and sisters off the streets...

and more...

Published by the United Nations
Department of Public Information
Division for Economic and Social Information

Printed in U.S.A.
40813-June 1985-10,000
DESI.E114